

## SECTION I: ARTISTIC QUALITY & PUBLIC BENEFIT

### A. MISSION AND HISTORY

Arts education is who we are and what we do. Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania's (YA) mission is to inspire young people and expand their learning through the arts. The work of the Board of Trustees and staff is guided by a vision of a future in which all students in our region engage in high quality arts that are a basic part of their education, directly learning about art, art forms, and the processes of creating and expressing art.

Our venue is the school. Our model of delivery brings arts experiences by professional teaching artists directly to students. By doing so, we eliminate barriers to participation and make the arts accessible to students of every socioeconomic background, geographic area, and ability. We deliver this programming in formats designed to complement the workings of a school. Formats include workshops, residencies, performances, and teacher professional development. All programming is designed to meet school-defined needs. Our programs are consistent with New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in the Arts, National Core Arts Standards, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.

We begin our relationship with a school at the place they are willing and able to welcome the arts. We strive to work in partnership with schools to provide long-term in-school programs centered around hands-on sequential arts learning activities for students. We work to surmount barriers like school budget, standardized testing demands, leadership changes, and teacher willingness and preparedness to nurture relationships and change school culture. We have helped many school communities grow and adapt to embrace the arts (see Mercer Elementary Letter of Support).

Since our founding in 1973, YA has grown into the region's largest arts education organization. YA serves students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12, their teachers and their families. Over the last 42 years our programs have affected 12 million children. In 2014-2015, our programming was delivered in 542 schools.

We are a proud member of the national network Young Audiences, Inc., comprised of 31 affiliates across the country. Each autonomous chapter shares a common mission, vision and goals. We are the largest affiliate.

The last 10 years have been a time of collaboration and growth, including the 2007 merger with The Institute for Arts and Humanities Education and the 2012 merger with YA of Eastern Pennsylvania. YA now serves children throughout all 21 New Jersey counties and the seven easternmost counties in Pennsylvania.

We are planning for a period of programming growth and expansion. The results of arts education advocacy efforts point to a renewed recognition of the arts and creativity as integral to a child's education. Educators have embraced STEAM, and the new national ESSA legislation is groundbreaking in its requirements for the arts as a vital component for a well-rounded education. YA has entered into a strategic partnership with the NJ Arts Education Partnership to implement their multi-year public awareness and advocacy campaign, #ARTSEDNOW.

In June 2016 the YA board will approve the 2017-2019 strategic plan (see Draft Strategic Plan). The plan's overarching goals are:

1. Provide quality arts programming in New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania, working toward the ultimate goal of reaching every child every year.
2. Advocate for the vital role of the arts in children's experience, growth, and learning.
3. Lead the field of arts-in-education by establishing quality standards in artistry and education across all programs.
4. Measure and communicate the impact of arts education on students' lives and learning.
5. Partner to increase our reach across the region and through collaboration improve the field of arts education.
6. Deepen relationships with teaching artists and educators to expand our reach and maintain quality, relevant programming.

## B. PROGRAMMING

Children are at the center of our work. YA teaching artists focus on an outcome driven approach, with emphasis on the skills and knowledge children should acquire, understand, and apply to their lives and learning. At the center of this model are the four core elements that are the hallmark of all YA programming:

1. EXPERIENCE extraordinary art and artists,
2. UNDERSTAND the value of art and creativity in the world,
3. CREATE art that engages the imagination and expresses ideas, and
4. CONNECT the creative process to learning and life.

YA has made significant strides in increasing school staff involvement in planning. Our new programs are developed to include stipends for educator input in planning, implementation, and assessment. For Dodge Theater to Learn and the Creativity Consultant Project, teachers receive stipends to attend summer training, contribute to curriculum, and assess the work. Planning meetings have evolved beyond just scheduling. With school staff and teaching artist input, these meetings are used to assess school needs and determine how arts education can address them. Educators share student learning goals and school climate issues, and the team jointly identifies intended outcomes for the work.

DANCE TO LEARN (D2L) is a hands-on sequential curriculum for 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades that advances dance education in schools, created in partnership with the Dodge Foundation. D2L uses the fundamental elements of dance—space, time, energy, and the body—as the foundation for its exploration. Working with a professional artist, students create, choreograph, rehearse, and perform an original dance piece and learn the multicultural and historical aspects of dance. Once completed, YA partnered with Dance NJ to implement the program through dance companies including Lustig, Roxey and Freespace. Yearly, this program serves 1,600 students.

DODGE THEATER TO LEARN is YA's new four-year sequential theater curriculum, based on the success of D2L and funded by the Dodge Foundation. Students in 2-5 grades actively explore elements of theater such as character, story, and setting and learn theater vocabulary, skills, and concepts. As part of the residency, all students experience live theater and develop an understanding of the aesthetic and personal value of theater. The NJ Theatre Alliance is a partner and they will help disseminate the program across the state's theaters. Currently in its first year of implementation, this program serves 425 students. (See Theater to Learn 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Curriculum.)

EMERGING ARTIST CREATIVITY HUB is a sequential series of 20 collaborative arts workshops that provide 25 young artists, ages 13-18, with the opportunity to explore multiple art

mediums. Students are guided by professional artists as they create individual art works, collaborate on group art-making, and design and implement community art projects. The program is undertaken in partnership with The College of New Jersey. (See EACH Syllabus.)

FAMILY ARTS AND CREATIVITY PROGRAM is a family-centered arts education program designed to promote a family's engagement in the arts. Parents and children participate in a sequential series of art-making workshops and collaborate in art-making that gives them an opportunity to share ideas, make discoveries, and experience the creative process together. The program serves 300 families annually.

ARTISTS-IN-EDUCATION PROGRAM (AIE) is the cornerstone of NJSCA's educational programming. AIE's goal is to make the arts a basic part of quality education. These 20+ day residencies are conducted by professional teaching artists selected from the NJSCA Designated Artist Roster. YA is the sole partner with the Council in this co-sponsored program. In 2014, the AIE program adopted several changes to its structure including the addition of two regional partners to manage residencies, a new funding strategy to encourage long-term residencies modeled after AIE, and adding online tools for AIE schools to document and evaluate their residencies in real time. In 2014-2015, AIE conducted 12 residencies.

BRIDGE TO AIE PROGRAM introduces schools to the AIE Program and recruits potential schools to apply to AIE. YA education staff vet schools that have worked in our signature programming and successfully completed shorter-term residencies. Bridge schools receive full funding for a 20-day artist's residency for up to two years and are encouraged to develop an AIE application. New this year, YA raised \$30,150 to fund three schools.

THE ADOPT-A-SCHOOL INITIATIVE provides substantial and sustained learning in the arts, modeled after AIE. It includes school-based planning, hands-on art-making experiences, and culturally diverse performances for the entire school. Schools are supported by foundations, businesses, corporations, and individuals committed to improving schools. Created in 2006 in response to the Trenton School District's elimination of the arts, YA has grown the program to serve every K-8 student in Trenton, reaching 8,500 students annually. (See Woodrow Wilson Dance Residency video.)

CAMDEN ADOPT-A-SCHOOL INITIATIVE began as an effort to expand the Adopt-a-School Initiative into Camden City Public Schools. In 2014-2015, we secured funding to pilot the program with McGraw Elementary School. This year, YA is working with three Camden schools with funding pending to serve an additional two schools. YA is continuing to develop relationships with schools to expand the project to serve six schools in 2016-2017.

NRG CREATIVELY GREEN is a series of five family arts festivals accompanied by residencies that explore art, environmental sustainability, and science, supported by NRG Energy, Inc. During a 3-day residency, students work with a professional artist to create a "green" community art project to share during the festival. The 3-hour family festival features specially designed art workshops for students and families and a performance teaching ways to protect our environment.

WORKSHOPS AND RESIDENCIES transform a classroom into an artist studio and provide hands-on sequential art learning activities. Students and teachers are guided by professional artists to actively engage in art-making experiences for one to 20 days. In 2014-2015, we provided 2,816 workshops and residencies, constituting 62% of our programs.

PERFORMANCES are valued by YA as a vital component of arts education. Our performances introduce the arts and provide new and diverse cultural experiences to our audience of students and teachers. While our stage is a school auditorium, the work is no less important or impactful than an event at a performing arts venue. YA strives to ensure that children value live performance as an essential part of a full life, cultivating the next generation of performing arts supporters. Performances represent 27% of our programs.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD) seminars constitute 8% of our work and empower and encourage classroom teachers to integrate the arts across the curriculum. We offer three PD models:

-Embedded Professional Development provides an active role for the classroom teacher as the artist embeds PD in multi-day residencies. The artist and teachers meet to map out a strategy, then the artist models lessons and demonstrates creative inquiry. Teachers learn to lead lessons and activities with the goal of extending the artistic process beyond the residency.

-Creativity Consultants is in its fourth year, funded by the Dodge Foundation, and this program encourages creativity and innovation within schools. A specially trained group of YA teaching artists serve as Creativity Consultants, working with school faculty to explore arts-based ideas and programs to facilitate learning. They help establish “creative learning communities” within each school to promote creativity in every aspect of student learning.

-Creative Beginnings is YA’s award-winning program that trains early childhood educators to teach arts lessons to their students in low-income preschools. Professional artists with early childhood expertise work with teachers to provide arts-based professional development to enhance teacher skills. Participating children experience movement, music, storytelling, and visual art led by both the professional teaching artist and the classroom teacher.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY EVENTS represent 3% of our programs and the goal of this work is to extend arts education to parents and families.

YA uses a variety of teaching tools for teaching artists, classroom teachers, and students. Teaching artists develop curricula and lesson plans for each program. Classroom teachers are given supplemental material including handbooks and study guides. YA relies on recognized resources in developing materials, such as The Artful Teaching and Learning Handbook and online curriculum development tools such as NJ Department of Education Model Curriculum, Chicago Guide for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, Students with Disabilities and the Core Arts Standards: Guiding Principles for Teachers, and Arts Education Partnership-Common Core and the Arts.

YA uses online platforms to engage teachers and teaching artists across schools and districts. Wiggio, GoogleDocs, and Facebook groups provide space to share ideas, lesson plans, and techniques with other educators. YA shares published texts and articles to support development and growth of both artists and classroom educators.

## C. ARTISTRY

The quality of our teaching artists and their ability to educate children is our top priority.

YA engages 226 professional teaching artists and provides them with the opportunity to work with students, teachers, and parents. In addition, YA works with artists from the NJSCA roster for special projects and the AIE program. (See Selected Artist Bios.)

Artist selection and training is overseen by YA's Artist Services Manager. The education staff actively seeks out artists that expand our offerings and cultural diversity. The staff conducts auditions and site visits, and prospective artists complete an application that includes a resume, work samples, and references.

If selected, the education staff works with the artist to integrate the four elements method and define and clarify intended learning outcomes. Educational support materials are developed for the classroom teacher.

We have established educational and artistic evaluative criteria to measure artist readiness to work with YA. Artistry and programs must 1) develop a child's love and appreciation for the arts; 2) nurture creativity; 3) increase knowledge and skills within individual art forms and provide a wide range of art-based experiences; 4) respond to the varying learning styles and multiple intelligences; 5) encourage awareness, appreciation and respect for different cultures and backgrounds; and 6) increase teacher knowledge and skills with teaching in and through the arts.

We continually work to nurture a community of collaboration and support among our artists. YA has launched a variety of efforts to serve artist needs, including paid professional development seminars such as Get Creative with the Common Core, Working with Diverse Learners in the Arts, and Working Alongside Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Communications include monthly updates on YA's work and the field of arts education, online communities, and in-person potluck get-togethers.

We continue our partnership with NJSCA and the NJ Arts Education Collective to deliver an annual statewide multi-day artist training. In addition, YA raises funds for artists to attend the Young Audiences, Inc. national conferences and we encourage artists to develop conference presentations.

#### D. ASSESSMENT

Our goal is to offer programs that are child-centered, outcome-driven and measurably effective. We strive to produce model arts education programs that meet or exceed the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards and align with National Core Art Standards and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.

In 2013 we added an Assessment Coordinator to our education staff and in 2014 YA began participation in the Dodge Foundation's Collaborative Evaluation and Assessment Effort for Arts Education Grantees. The goal of this program is to develop an evaluation protocol of agreed upon measurable outcomes in student academic and social/emotional growth for arts education programs. Dodge's consultant has played a critical role in advising YA on assessment and aided in developing Dodge Theater to Learn assessment tools.

Our process is evolving as we undertake a comprehensive approach to assessing the outcomes of our work. Grounded in the methods of qualitative research, we aim to not merely audit, but to

utilize the data collection to measure outcomes, promote reflection and discussion, and improve quality.

Assessment is adapted to delivery methods. Major programs like AIE, Creativity Consultants, and Theater to Learn have customized assessment protocols that provide clear and concise feedback on the effectiveness of the programs. For performances and workshops, teaching artists embed assessment markers with open-ended questions, a method that provides immediate formative assessment, reinforces material learned, and prompts further exploration. For multi-day programs, assessment tools include interviews, pre and post surveys, work samples, discussion, and observation. (See Theater to Learn Assessment Surveys.)

## E. PUBLIC BENEFIT AND ACCESS

The children of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania are YA's "public." YA takes several approaches to providing broad accessibility to all students.

Our development efforts raise \$1 million each year to provide access for underserved schools. In June 2015 we concluded a capital campaign that raised \$800,000 for a scholarship fund for underserved schools. We structure our fundraising and program implementation to reduce or remove barriers to access including location, poverty, ethnicity, and ability.

YA tracks public benefit with a database that captures program, audience, school, district, and county data. This data is used in combination with MDR, the leading educational marketing data resource, and data from the NJ Arts Education Census. School size, ethnic diversity, legislative district, socioeconomic status, and Census ratings help us better understand and serve the area's student population.

Analysis of this data and interactions in the field lead the education staff to make adjustments to broaden, deepen, and diversify participation and reach. Some of these areas of focus include:

Reaching children with special needs: YA has recruited artists with disabilities, hired staff with expertise, and trained our artists to work with children with a wide spectrum of physical, developmental, and cognitive needs.

Improving family involvement: We provide daytime and evening programming to accommodate parent work schedules and we welcome siblings into programming. We are developing supplemental materials designed for parents and children to use together, meant for students to take home following a YA program (and bilingual when appropriate).

Meeting educational needs: When schools expressed a need for programs in technology and media arts, we added a program offering first time media makers the opportunity to produce, distribute and exhibit short form documentary films.

The statistics for the 2014-2015 school year:

1. 420,000 students and parents and 19,712 teachers participated in YA programs.
2. Programs took place in 542 schools and 229 community venues.
3. Demographically, our student population represented:  
22% African-American

9% Asian or Pan-Islander  
50% Caucasian  
18% Latino/Hispanic  
1% Other

## MARKETING EFFORTS

With a full-time marketing and public relations director since November 2012, we have undertaken a comprehensive approach to broaden our reach and deepen our impact. We have developed a multi-platform strategy to market our programs for broad reach comprised of email communications, social media outreach, direct mail, and referrals. Our website ([www.yanjep.org](http://www.yanjep.org)) supports these platforms and features a searchable database of teaching artists and programs.

We've expanded our email and social media presence. Our Facebook page has 1,676 followers and we host three additional accounts for specific programs—EACH, Creative Beginnings, and Creativity Consultants. YA's Twitter account has 841 followers and we've recently developed an Instagram presence to reach a younger demographic. Marketing efforts have expanded to include radio, producing spots to highlight the value of the arts and encourage attendance at our yearly showcases.

With our yearly gala, Dazzle, under the direction of the marketing director, the event has become a central part of our fundraising, marketing, and advocacy efforts. This mission-driven event uses a dance competition with four community volunteers. The event highlight is a performance by students from the Trenton Adopt-a-School program who have participated in a dance residency. The event continues to attract new arts education advocates and supporters each year.

## SECTION II: GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, PLANNING, FINANCES

### A. GOVERNANCE/MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS/STRATEGIC PLANNING

YA is governed by a Board of Trustees comprised of 29 volunteers. This diverse and dedicated group comes from a variety of backgrounds including law, medicine, architecture, business, education, and the arts. We have improved geographic diversity with trustees from North, South, and Central Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. The group is 65% women and 35% men, 20% are under 50, and 3 are living with a disability. Over the next 3 years the board will work to improve ethnic diversity so that our board better reflects the diversity of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.

The board's commitment to arts education is unwavering. All trustees support their passion for arts education with their service to the board and 100% of trustees contribute financially. By unanimous vote the board now requires YA trustees to become members of Art Pride New Jersey. All board and staff have also endorsed Arts Plan New Jersey.

The bylaws underwent a revision in 2012 led by the Committee on Trustees. A critical revision was the adoption of term limits. Trustees are elected to a maximum of three, three-year terms.

All trustees are required to serve on at least one standing committee: Executive, Finance, Arts Education, Development, Planning and Institutional Advancement, Committee on Trustees, Audit, and Eastern Pennsylvania. We encourage non-board member participation on

committees. The board meets five times a year to conduct official business. The Executive Committee meets monthly to review interim progress. The Finance Committee meets quarterly to review fiscal health and monitor the budget process. Other committees meet bimonthly or as needed.

Trustees participate in a yearly evaluation led by the Committee on Trustees. The results and input from the Executive Committee and President determine board goals for the following year.

2015 was a year of leadership change. Richard Goldman resumed his role as trustee after six years as Board Chair and the board elected veteran trustee Belinda Roll to succeed him. Also in 2015, President & CEO Larry Capo retired. After a national search led by a committee of trustees and staff, Michele Russo was selected by a unanimous vote of the board. Michele began her tenure as President in October 2015.

Michele leads YA, a staff of thirteen and our cadre of teaching artists. Maureen Heffernan serves as Director of Arts & Education, guiding the seven-person education staff to develop and implement programs and initiatives. YA staff members possess extensive arts education knowledge and serve dual roles as teaching artists on some of our funded programs.

Office management consists of finance, human resources and office technology administration to maintain proper business protocol, policies and procedures. Our marketing and public relations director utilizes all broadcast outlets to create awareness. The development team supports our board committees while fundraising for programs and operational sustainability. (See Staff and Artist Bios.)

The conclusion of YA's last strategic plan coincided with organizational leadership change at the board chair and president levels. The Transition Committee, which implemented the succession plan for these two positions, recommended extending the current strategic plan through June 2016 to draft the FY17-19 plan with input from the new leadership team. The Planning Committee is overseeing the strategic planning process. A working draft was developed with input from board and staff, and each standing committee reviewed and revised the plan. The board unanimously approved the working draft for submission with this proposal at the January 27, 2016 meeting. Revisions will continue with the final plan approved in June 2016.

## B. FISCAL SOUNDNESS/FINANCIAL RESOURCES

YA is financially stable and debt free. Our auditors indicate that our fiscal health, financial policies, and procedures represent best practices. Our Finance Director guides the budgeting process, monitors all spending and investment policies and works with the Finance Committee to ensure financial well-being.

Our budget is designed for maximum transparency and carefully tracks all income and expenses for each of our major projects and GOS. Staff participates in budget development and takes ownership of all aspects of their projects. Quarterly meetings are held to monitor progress of each program and ensure grant requirements are being met.

The 2016 budget is \$3.01 million, of which 87% or \$2,612,000 represents the work in New Jersey. Earned income (\$1.36 million) represents fees received from school and community residencies, performances, and professional development services. Contributed income (\$1.64 million) is diversified across four income streams—government (21%), foundation (39%),



corporate (18%), and individuals (22%). We have an Operating Reserve Fund of \$225,000 and an approved but unused line-of-credit totaling \$50,000.

Our most exciting fiscal advancement is the completion of a \$3.1 million capital campaign. The campaign built an endowment (\$2 million), established a scholarship fund (\$800,000), and covered campaign expenses (\$300,000). The campaign was launched in September 2012 and completed in June 2015, surpassing the goal.

The capital campaign was a monumental undertaking and its effects have been transformative. The effort engaged our board and reinvigorated their work, inspired new fundraising approaches including planned giving, and added nearly 1,000 new contacts to our donor database.

### SECTION 3: ARTS EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND LEADERSHIP

Arts education is who we are and what we do. We have detailed our arts education/arts learning in Section 1.

#### A. PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING/ADVOCACY

YA's Board of Trustees and staff advocate for arts education. We promote public policy and assist in developing curricular standards and improving our schools. Additionally, we've formed relationships with elected officials and community leaders, including Rush Holt, Trenton's Mayor Eric Jackson, and Middlesex County Freeholders James Polos and Ken Armwood.

In 2013 we launched the Arts Champions Award Program, an initiative to celebrate and recognize excellence, innovation, and creativity in arts education, presented to schools, organizations, educators and students that demonstrate passion and dedication to the arts. To date we've presented 37 awards and publicized the initiative through social media and press releases.

Last year, we created the Arts Matter advocacy campaign, asking staff, trustees, volunteers, and arts education stewards to create short videos about why the arts matter. The videos were shared on social media with the hashtag #ArtsMatterYA and through numerous email marketing campaigns, our website, and our YouTube channel.

YA has entered into a strategic partnership with the NJ Arts Education Partnership. In our role as lead partner, YA will help develop tools and implement the advocacy campaign #ARTSEDNOW with the goal of sustaining and growing arts participation in K-12 education and ensuring that the value of teaching artists in schools is emphasized and communicated to stakeholders and decision-makers.

Key to our advocacy and commitment to public understanding is our involvement with a variety of important statewide and national initiatives, including:

- New Jersey Arts Education Partnership: YA Trustee Mary Reece is a trustee; Michele Russo and Maureen Heffernan serve on the steering committee, the model school initiative and the NJ Arts Census Project

- Art Pride New Jersey: YA serves as Art Pride's Mercer County legislative coordinator

- Cultural Access Network NJ: Maureen Heffernan serves on the steering committee

- New Jersey Arts Education Collective: YA serves on the board and is the fiscal agent
- Creative New Jersey: Maureen Heffernan serves on the leadership council and is a facilitator
- New Jersey Department of Education: Maureen Heffernan serves as an evaluator and participates in arts core curriculum revisions
- Sustainable Jersey Schools: Michele Russo serves on their Arts and Creative Culture Task force
- Lead New Jersey: Michele Russo is a 2014 graduate, Maureen Heffernan is a 2012 graduate
- Educators as Scholars program of FEA/NJPSA: Maureen Heffernan and Michelle Marigliano serve as mentors
- Dodge Emerging Leaders Program: Michele Russo is a member
- Young Audiences, Inc. National Network: YA Trustee Marilyn Grounds serves on the YAI Board of Trustees; Michele Russo serves on the Executive Director Council; four staff members participated in YAI's Emerging Leadership Program

We work with non-traditional partners to deliver programs and advance greater public understanding and value for the arts, including MidJersey Chamber, Princeton Regional Chamber, Mercer NJ Business Group, Montgomery Rotary, The New Jersey State Museum, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, The College of New Jersey, William Paterson University, New Jersey School Age Care Coalition, Cumberland Empowerment Zone, The Children's Home Society in Trenton, and Greater Bergen Community Action Partnership.

## B. LEADERSHIP/COUNCIL PRIORITIES/BEST PRACTICES AND MODELS

Our work supports Arts Plan New Jersey and the Council Priorities. Three programs of note and their support of Council priorities are:

**SERVING THE NEEDS OF ARTISTS:** YA supports 226 artists with opportunities for school day work by marketing their programs to schools and fundraising to support their work. \$1.4 million of income is paid to our artists each year. YA offers participation in a community of creativity and support. YA's support and guidance has transformed the work of numerous teaching artists. For example, Laura Marchese began with YA as a teacher in Dance to Learn. Her role grew and she was selected to co-write the sequential dance curriculum. Recognizing her skills, YA selected Laura for the Creativity Consultant project, first as a mentee and then as a consultant. Her artistry has flourished as she's expanded her work from dance to incorporate multiple artforms.

**PROMOTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND DIVERSIFYING CULTURAL PARTICIPATION:** YA artists offer programs to students in every art form showcasing the heritages and traditions of over 50 world cultures. Because the school is YA's venue and the students our participants, we have the unique opportunity to broaden participation among all cultures in the state. In a recent residency, teaching artist Pat Flynn used theater activities like pantomime to engage a group of first grade students who are refugees from Myanmar, speak no English and had no translator.

Until the theater residency, the refugees had never participated actively in any classroom activities.

**PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY:** We work to provide arts accessibility to students with special needs, training artists and adapting programming to serve all students. This work has impacted many students: Sophia, a 4 year-old Pre-K student who never spoke a word at school found her voice while beating her name in a drumming circle; students in wheelchairs learned choreography and created a dance piece, performing their dance to the amazement of fellow students, teachers, and parents; and Ethan, an 18 year-old aspiring playwright with Autism Spectrum Disorder, was asked to present his work at a YA training for artists and educators, resulting in Ethan feeling validated as an artist and seeing his work as a serious pursuit.